

# Community Design and Neighborhoods

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*Willow Grove*



*Highland Road*

## Introduction: Community Design and Neighborhoods

Baton Rouge's neighborhoods are among the community's greatest assets. The City's earliest neighborhoods grew as extensions of downtown and were built within a network of well-connected streets linking areas of town to each other and to the Port where goods and services were exchanged. Today, Baton Rouge is fortunate to have a significant amount of remaining historic housing stock from the early 1900s, and the City-Parish is committed to maintaining and rebuilding older neighborhoods in cooperation with owners and the community.

As new communities grow and reinvestment in existing neighborhoods continues, the City-Parish should be guided by a vision for strong interconnected neighborhoods and districts which are healthy, and comfortable environments. The Urban Design and Neighborhood element provides the Land Use and the Transportation elements with recommendations for form, character, and functionality.

### Core Values and Aspirations of the Vision

A diverse group of residents and stakeholders representing all parts of East Baton Rouge Parish provided input through workshops, open houses, interviews, focus groups and survey discussions. Respondents consistently cited the following core values and aspirations they believed should be the foundation for building a vision for East Baton Rouge Parish.

Core values that relate to urban design and neighborhoods:

**Equity:** All residents have access to a good education, public services, housing and job opportunities.

**Safety:** People feel safe where they live, work and play.

**Strong neighborhoods and communities:** Neighborhoods in all areas of the City-Parish are desirable places to live and have a range of housing types and nearby amenities to serve residents.

**Sustainability:** The future reflects the creativity and resiliency of East Baton Rouge Parish's young residents, with a focus on fiscal, physical, environmental, economic and equitable sustainability.

## Part 1: Managing Form

Currently, Baton Rouge Parish has nine urban design overlays which supplement underlying zoning districts. They establish a wide variety of design requirements including minimum sidewalk widths, parking design requirements and façade treatments. These districts are custom tailored to specific areas, allowing direct response to site-specific conditions, but the requirements also create a management burden because each overlay district has a different set of standards and allowable elements.

The map on the following page, followed by individual Character Area descriptions, provide a brief overview of each area, where they may be applied and the general type of design character which will be found within these areas.

### The Character Area Map

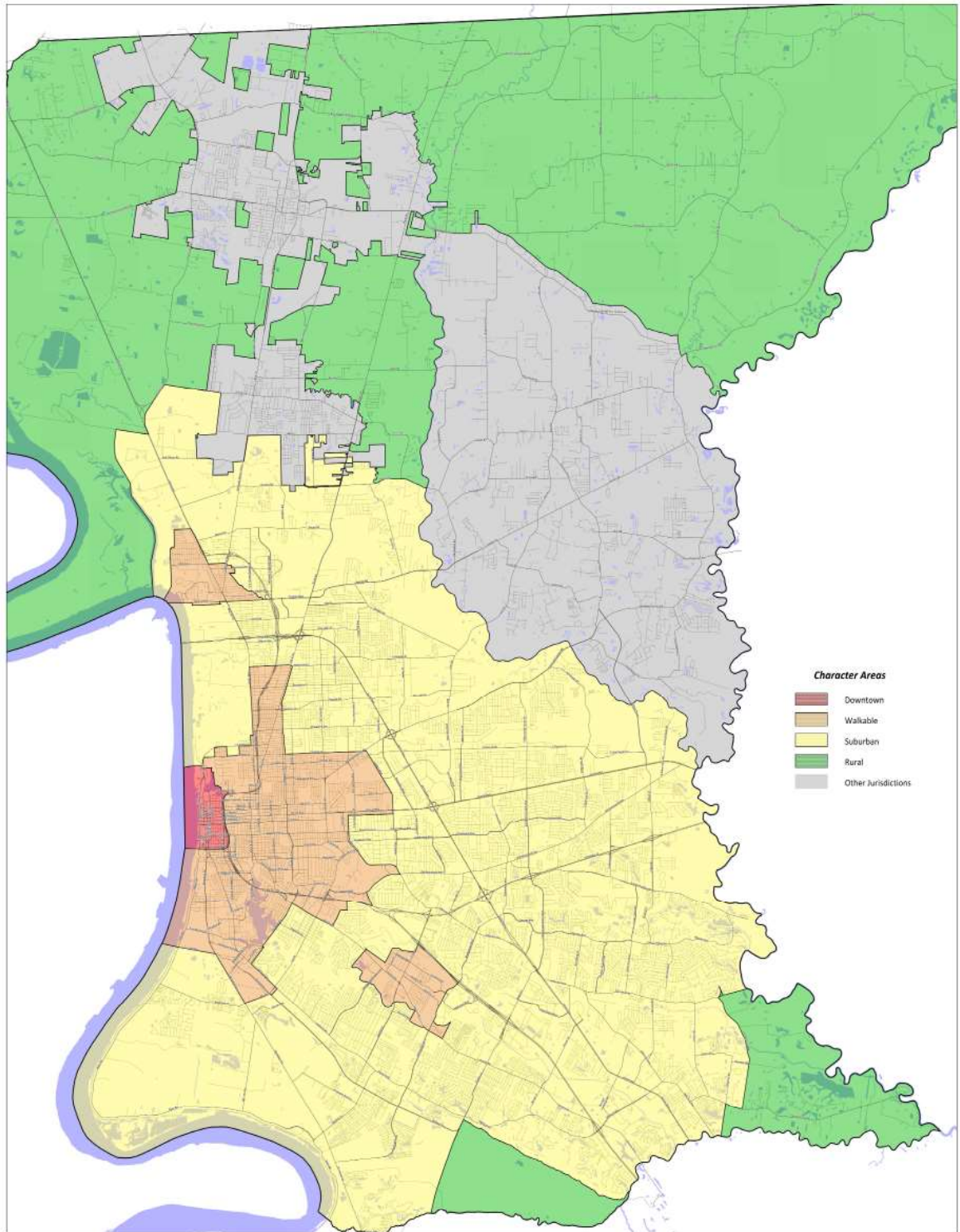
The FUTUREBR Character Areas map represents the vision for improved design quality across the City-Parish. To develop this map, planners took into consideration the adopted FUTUREBR Land Use Map; the street type and context of an area; the existing land use and development character; and citizen input.

FUTUREBR, in the Land Use Element, identifies appropriate Character Area for each Land Use classification utilized across the City-Parish. From this, planners were able to determine which land use classifications best matched with each Character Area.

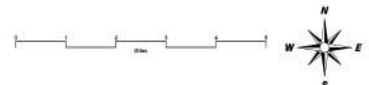
It is important to note that, while using the aspirational goal of the FUTUREBR Land Use Map and classifications as a guide, planners reviewed the existing development patterns of property before recommending the placement of a specific Character Area. This approach ensured that the map is based on reality. Areas that are currently completely built out, or that would require significant public and private investment to change their design standard and character, were not considered potential areas where upgraded design standards could realistically be applied.

This map shall be regularly reviewed, most often during the Five-Year Update cycle, with changes in the location of Character Areas recommended as development patterns shift or change.

## Part 1: Managing Form



**Character Areas**  
June 2015



# COMMUNITY DESIGN AND NEIGHBORHOODS

## Part 1: Managing Form

### Downtown Character Area



*Third Street*



*Commerce Building*

#### RECOMMENDED STANDARDS:

**Buildings:** Buildings should front the street. Entrances should be prominent and street facing. Buildings should include numerous windows facing streets and sidewalks and no blank walls. Building design should compliment surrounding architecture and a high level of building transparency is necessary for ground-floor uses.

**Parking:** Parking should be located on-street and within parking structures. No parking should be allowed between the building and the street. Parking structures along main streets should include liner uses for ground-floor commercial space.

**Pedestrian walkways and landscaping:** Street trees in tree grates are recommended between the sidewalk and street. Outdoor dining is encouraged. Sidewalk bulb-outs, pavement variation, raised crosswalks and public art provide traffic calming measures, which will keep auto speeds moderate and improve the pedestrian environment.

**Site considerations:** A well connected network of streets with small blocks is encouraged. The street network design should provide a high level of connectivity to adjacent uses, neighborhoods, and districts.

The Downtown area represents the historic core of the City of Baton Rouge that is developed with the highest intensity uses in the parish as well as the older neighborhoods immediately adjacent to it. It includes pedestrian-oriented and bikeable areas within downtown or other pedestrian-oriented areas with similar densities as downtown.

### Walkable Character Area



*Perkins Rowe*



*Victory Commons*

#### RECOMMENDED STANDARDS:

**Buildings:** Buildings should front the street. Entrances should be prominent and street facing. Buildings on corner lots should be oriented to the corner and public street fronts.

**Parking:** Parking should be located on-street and/or at the rear of buildings. Parking credits and “in-lieu of” programs are encouraged.

**Pedestrian walkways and landscaping:** Wide, highly visible crosswalks and sidewalk bulb-outs should be included. Trees should be located in tree grates between the sidewalk and street. Any surface parking lots should be screened from view of the street by landscaped hedges or low walls and located on sites.

**Site considerations:** A well connected network of streets with small blocks is encouraged.

Walkable areas represent the small lot residential neighborhoods that largely developed within the city limits of Baton Rouge prior to 1949, commercial areas that serve these neighborhoods, and employment and retail centers focused on walkability. They include pedestrian-oriented and bikeable areas with transit service that have lower planned density than downtown Baton Rouge.

# COMMUNITY DESIGN AND NEIGHBORHOODS

## Part 1: Managing Form

### Suburban Character Area



*Bluebonnet Center*



*Green Trails at Shenandoah*

#### RECOMMENDED STANDARDS:

**Buildings:** Commercial building walls facing streets should be articulated with windows and well-defined entry openings.

**Parking:** In commercial areas, provide visual relief by limiting the lengths of parking rows. Reduce or eliminate minimum parking requirements.

**Pedestrian walkways and landscaping:** In commercial areas, wide, highly visible crosswalks are encouraged and sidewalks should become standard. A vegetated buffer should be included between sidewalks and roadways. Trees and landscaping should be incorporated in parking lots. For residential areas, sidewalks should be standard on at least one -side of the street, with both sides of the street preferred.

**Site considerations:** The street network design should be connected to reduce “superblocks.” Smaller retail buildings around the perimeter of larger parking areas should be encouraged. This can transform under-utilized conventional suburban shopping centers into environments where walking between buildings becomes more appealing.

Suburban areas include much of the large-lot residential development of the parish, which are predominantly auto-oriented with limited opportunities for pedestrian activity. Suburban areas have the potential for enhanced pedestrian commercial areas, and sidewalks that connect to schools, public facilities and those commercial areas.

### Rural Character Area



*Pride One Stop*



*Rural Residential*

#### RECOMMENDED STANDARDS:

**General Character:** Located in outlying parts of the Parish and are not likely to be developed or redeveloped in the near term. Typically characterized by large lot residential or agricultural uses.

**Pedestrian walkways and landscaping:** In commercial areas, wide, highly visible crosswalks are encouraged and pedestrian access should be facilitated. Trees and landscaping should be incorporated in parking lots. For residential areas, pedestrian pathways should be encouraged, however sidewalks will not always be required.

**Site considerations:** The street network design should be connected to reduce “superblocks.”

Rural areas are located in outlying parts of the parish that are not likely to be developed or redeveloped in the near-term. These areas typically have streets that are not curbed or guttered and large acreage lots that may be used for agricultural purposes.

## Part 2: Pedestrian Friendly Design

Many communities have developed zones that successfully meet the needs of both automobiles and pedestrians. The Community Design and Neighborhood element includes descriptions of ways Baton Rouge can increase connectivity and walkability and includes policy goals which should be implemented through zoning.

Walkability is linked to numerous, well-documented health benefits.

There is an increasing association between suburban design, sedentary lifestyles, and obesity in America. Compact, walkable design promotes a more integrated, active lifestyle, reduces the need for new land to accommodate new growth and increases support of transit facilities.

Within a city, walkable districts use less land than auto-oriented districts. Street lane widths and number of auto travel lanes are typically reduced. Buildings are not necessarily larger but parking is usually located on-street, in smaller parking lots and multiple businesses may share a single lot or parking structure. This means more land is available for preserving open space and communities can spend less money on costly extensions of infrastructure.

### Basic Characteristics of Pedestrian-Friendly Design

Successful areas that depend on walk-in traffic – main streets, entertainment districts, downtowns – rely on advertising goods and services to passing pedestrians. Downtown Baton Rouge, the North Gate district and the recently developed Perkins Rowe are all walkable districts where people may arrive by car but park only once. Visitors in these districts often find that leaving the car behind can be both convenient and pleasant. The vision for FUTUREBR is to strengthen these existing walkable districts and to foster the additional successful centers which become destinations for surrounding neighborhoods.

An active pedestrian environment is critically dependent on appropriately designed sidewalks. Safety is a prime concern and narrow sidewalks or sidewalks directly adjacent to higher speed streets will feel unsafe to pedestrians. Sidewalks should be designed to reduce conflicts between automobiles and pedestrians, and should be adequately illuminated and universally accessible. Driveways in these areas are infrequent and parking should be located along streets, in parking structures or in strategically located parking lots. In walkable districts, buildings should face and be sited close to the street, rather than located behind large front parking lots.

### How to Plan for and Create Walkable Communities

Walkable communities are the result of good urban design and successful implementation strategies. The most effective method to create pedestrian-friendly districts is to use a three-pronged approach to implementation:

- Partnerships
- Public investment
- Regulation

#### Partnerships

Partnerships involve a sharing of efforts, money, or expertise between a local government and either another governmental agency, a business entity or private person, or a nonprofit organization. Partnerships are a valuable tool to help spark new, lively, pedestrian-friendly districts or to help create new momentum in an older district. A new project, if successful, can change market perceptions and thereby generate additional private development. In prime real estate areas, partnerships are also useful in providing land uses that the market would not typically provide. One example is housing for residents with moderate incomes in areas such as downtown where the market would typically provide only retail, office development, and high-end residential.

Partnerships with groups of existing land and business owners can be used to finance the necessary right-of-way improvements to turn a potentially good walkable district into a great one. An example of a financing mechanism to accomplish this is a Local Improvement District, or LID. LIDs help finance needed capital improvements by forming special assessment districts. LIDs permit improvements to be

financed and paid for over time instead of an up-front lump sum. These districts have been used in numerous cities through the country to finance wider sidewalks, reconfiguration of streets to make room for on-street parking, and even to build modern streetcar systems.

#### Public Investment

Public investments are direct expenditures that can improve an area and also can change the climate in which private decisions are made. Public investment policies are key strategies to ensure that changes to public infrastructure support walkable communities. Public investments that encourage walkable development include:

- Right-of-way improvements
- Sidewalk widening
- On-street parking
- Street trees
- Sidewalk bulb-outs and median pedestrian refuges
- Traffic calming measures

In some instances, where costs are prohibitive to connect existing roads, pedestrian and bike connections accomplish many of the same benefits, but at a reduced cost. Traffic calming measures are sometimes appropriate to lower traffic speeds enabling pedestrian traffic to flourish; traffic calming options are discussed further in the Transportation element.

# COMMUNITY DESIGN AND NEIGHBORHOODS

## Part 2: Pedestrian Friendly Design

### THE IMPORTANCE OF STREET TREES

Maintaining the existing trees and carefully planning new plantings will have a tremendous and positive influence on East Baton Rouge Parish's future. In order to have a highly successful pedestrian realm, trees must be given a place in the intense competition for public space currently occupied by fire hydrants, garbage cans, utility lines, manholes, and directional devices. In fact, street trees are an urban requirement, rather than a decorative afterthought. Prohibitory regulations concerning tree planning and reluctance to undertake the associated maintenance are two major obstacles which must be directly addressed.

Since many municipalities do not plant street trees, an ordinance is needed to carry out a tree planting program based on a master plan for trees. Most street trees will need some maintenance throughout their life. Pruning, watering, pest control are all part of a successful maintenance program. The frequency of required maintenance can be minimized by choosing native tree species.

The idea of preparing a master tree planting plan is not new and has considerable merit. Tree planting on all the broad avenues of Washington, D.C. was part of L'Enfant's original plan for the city, though not executed until after the Civil War. Less extensive tree planting plans were completed in New York City, and parts of Philadelphia, PA, Vancouver, B.C., Savannah, GA, and New Orleans, LA. Given the significance of the visual impact and functional benefits of street trees, a well-conceived City-Parish design for street tree planting should be made a high priority planning task.

*Credit: Arnold, Henry. Trees in Urban Design, 1980.*



*River Road*

## Part 2: Pedestrian Friendly Design

### Regulations

Regulations are key planning tools that shape private investment, such as the location of buildings and parking, the form and size of buildings, and basic design features of the streetscape. Strategic regulations can affect the likelihood that development will occur where it is wanted and can discourage incompatible development.

### Zoning Modifications

Walkable communities are created not just through the design and land-uses of the immediate district, but they also must have a market of potential pedestrians within walking distance. Existing commercial zoning in these areas should allow residential development. In more vibrant pedestrian areas, residential land use should not be allowed on the first floor in order to maintain the streetscape quality of commercial storefronts. In addition, oversized commercial districts that act to discourage the development of nearby housing and office uses could be divided into a core commercial district with surrounding residential, office or more mixed-use development.

In many cases, busy collector streets that run through predominantly residential areas may be appropriate for the location of small neighborhood centers. Zoning for these centers allows smaller commercial and mixed-use buildings to ensure a relatively low impact on surrounding neighborhoods.

Because offices, college campuses and hospitals provide a viable source of pedestrian-oriented consumers, walkable commercial districts are an excellent fit with these land uses. Areas with existing pedestrian-friendly street design and traffic characteristics are great places to encourage more robust pedestrian districts.



Source: JJ&G

### PEDESTRIAN-FRIENDLY DESIGN

Successful pedestrian-oriented districts typically have a high density of shops and restaurants which are sometimes smaller than their auto-oriented counterparts. Pedestrian-oriented districts collectively benefit from the commercial vitality and the attraction of a destination-quality walkable urban environment.



Source: JJ&G

### AUTO-ORIENTED DESIGN

Much of current retailing practice aims to create a standard design that can easily fit into any suburban environment. Regardless of whether you're in Baton Rouge, Mobile, or Dallas, certain retail chain stores look essentially the same. These buildings are primarily oriented to the private automobile — making sure drivers have access and can find parking. These businesses perform best when visible and accessible along arterial streets with a lot of traffic. Parking is designed so that customers walk the minimum distance possible to their destination. In many cases, parking lots are sized to provide parking on the busiest day of the year.

## Part 2: Pedestrian Friendly Design

### Parking Guidelines for Pedestrian-Friendly Businesses

Like the zoning ordinances of many cities, Baton Rouge’s ordinance includes minimum off-street parking requirements. These requirements usually are expressed as a ratio proportionate to the gross leasable area of the building. For example, a 1,000 square foot building may be subject to a standard of providing five spaces per 1,000 square feet. When parking supply exceeds 3 spaces per 1,000 square feet, more area is set aside for parking than for usable floor space. Parking requirements are the greatest single determinant for achievable density. When density is reduced, opportunities for providing services within walking distance, and the potential for successful transit are also reduced.<sup>1</sup>

Because auto-oriented development must attract consumers with convenient parking availability, parking lots are designed for a capacity to accommodate the peak hours of the year, which is less than 1 percent of the total hours a shopping center is open per year. During this time, the “functional capacity” reaches 85-95 percent — the standard in which patrons should be able to find a parking space as soon as they enter the parking area. This means that more than half the spaces are empty most of the time.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Parolek D., and Parolek K., Form-Based Codes, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Parking Requirements for Shopping Centers, Urban Land Institute, 2000



*Chimes Street*

## Part 2: Pedestrian Friendly Design

In 2017, the Planning Commission adopted new parking standards based on the localized criteria of the Character Areas. Areas that are intended to be more walkable have lower parking requirements. Lower requirements do not necessarily mean less parking will be built, but they free developers to balance the needs of automobile users with the financial constraints of development and the desire for walkable districts. The amount of surface parking required for a retail store may seem like a minor issue at the neighborhood scale, but over time and across the city, the amount of land consumed just by surface parking lots can be enormous.

### WHY PARKING STANDARDS MATTER SO MUCH

Large surface parking lots separate buildings and increase walking distances – people are much less likely to walk because of the inconvenience.

Having substantial separation between buildings also works against the natural formation of a business district. Businesses seeking to relocate understandably do not view separated or spread-out commercial areas as a destination district where people will arrive and visit multiple businesses. They see these areas instead as a collection of unrelated businesses.

Surface parking competes against a building's footprint for the available lot area, reducing development intensities—the more surface parking on a site, the less room there is for a building.

High parking requirements increase development costs by forcing a developer to find a larger site for a proposed building. Parking requirements are especially onerous for potential redevelopment projects that often are the best locations for walkable districts.

## Part 3: Small Area Plans

### What Is a Small Area Plan?

Baton Rouge is made up of unique neighborhoods and places. Each one of these areas has its own distinct set of challenges that need to be addressed. The FUTUREBR plan presents a process for facilitating neighborhood growth and revitalization, called the small area planning process. The small area planning process is used to articulate a clear community-supported vision for individual neighborhoods or districts. Following a Small Area Planning process, recommended updates should be developed for land use, zoning, and investments.

While the FUTUREBR Comprehensive Plan identifies solutions for generalized issues, small area plans should include recommendations for very focused issues. If each small area plan includes its own unique zoning designations, design standards, or street types the planning and zoning would become hopelessly complex and fragmented. Instead, a standardized process for small area plans has been created so they can be readily adopted, efficiently administered, and implemented.

FUTUREBR identifies small area plans adopted by Metropolitan Council. Other small area plans are acknowledged, but not incorporated into the comprehensive plan.

### How Are Small Area Plans Initiated?

The pressures of growth and public investment create tremendous demand for undertaking small area plans. Small area planning is a partnership between the City-Parish and the area's stakeholders — residents, businesses, institutions and other government entities. Small area plans may be initiated by the neighborhood associations, business associations, private developers, the City-Parish Planning Commission or any other relevant entity.

The focus area for a small area plan can cover as few as 10 acres, a corridor, or a neighborhood. City-Parish staff from relevant departments, with assistance from the Planning Commission, should evaluate neighborhoods, corridors and districts and establish priorities.

### Small Area Plans

The Small Area Plans for Scotlandville and the Baton Rouge Health District have been formally adopted by Metropolitan Council. This action makes them an integral part of the FUTUREBR narrative and further refines the Vision of FUTUREBR for each individual area. Development within these areas are reviewed for consistency with the overall goals and objectives of the full FUTUREBR plan, as well as with the adopted Small Area Plans. Plans for the other areas have not been formally adopted.

The full text, maps and implementation recommendations of the adopted plans may be found on the Planning Commission's website.

1. Scotlandville (Adopted 2011)
2. Health District (Adopted 2016)
3. Downtown
4. Mid City
5. Old South Baton Rouge, Nicholson, and North Gate
6. Zion City and Glen Oaks
7. Northdale and Standard Heights
8. Choctaw Corridor
9. Melrose East

#### SELECTING SMALL AREAS

It is essential to evaluate and prioritize requests for small area plans. Selection criteria for small area planning may include:

- Evidence of disinvestment.
- Significant change.
- Public facilities and/or physical improvements that need to be addressed.
- Opportunities for substantial infill or redevelopment.
- Opportunities to influence site selection, development or major expansion of a single, large activity generator.

# COMMUNITY DESIGN AND NEIGHBORHOODS

## Part 3: Small Area Plans

### Scotlandville (Adopted 2011)

Home to the campus of Southern University, the Baton Rouge Metropolitan Airport and the Scotlandville neighborhood, this area serves as the functional northern gateway into the Parish, where people first experience a sense that they have arrived in Baton Rouge.

The Scotlandville Comprehensive Community Development Plan (SCCDP) is Small Area Plan within FUTUREBR that focuses more detail on the Scotlandville community. The Redevelopment Authority's (RDA) - Community Improvement Plan (CIP) is a type of small area plan that focuses on economic development within the SCCDP at the "Scotlandville Gateway". All three plans (FUTUREBR, SCCDP, CIP) work in concert with one another at different levels of development. Where boundaries overlap consult that specific plan for more details.

Public workshops and community-led redevelopment efforts have been in process since 2009. The proposed improvements are intended to enhance the gateway, reinstate a feeling of neighborhood pride and yield subsequent reinvestment in the area. In addition to the RDA, the Mayor's Green Light Program, along with other groups, have worked extensively with residents and business owners to build momentum for improvements that focus on historic preservation and improved walkability and livability.

Early successes in the Scotlandville area have included a business façade improvement program and streetscape improvements for Swan Avenue. Future potential redevelopment plans could include a neighborhood grocery store, small mixed-use infill projects, single-family houses, townhouses and apartments to be built within existing neighborhoods.



### THE SCOTLANDVILLE COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Scotlandville Comprehensive Community Development Plan (SCCDP) addresses a broad range of interrelated topics in a unified way. The SCCDP identifies & analyzes the relationships between the economy, transportation, housing, the physical environment, land use and zoning, social services, and other community components. The SCCDP sets forth goals; analyzes existing conditions and trends; describes and illustrates a vision for physical, social, and economic conditions of the community, prospectively for the next twenty (20) years. The plan outlines policies and guidelines intended to implement the community's vision. This plan was developed through an engaged collaborative process involving citizens, students, businesses, stakeholders, local government officials, and local and state agencies, ensuring this is a community driven plan, representing the Scotlandville community.

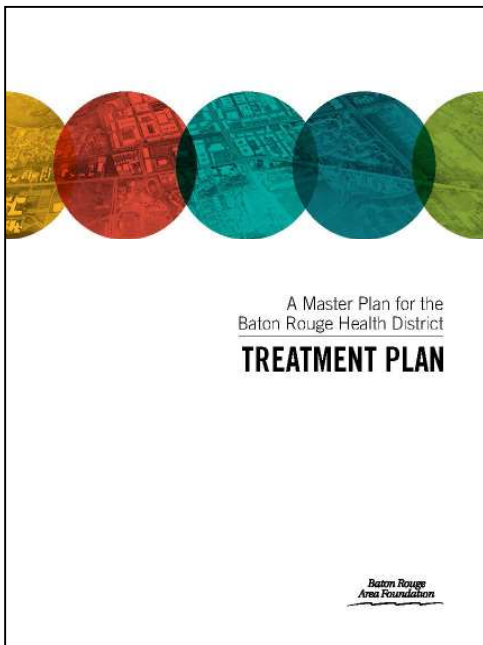
### Recommendations

- Establish a network of lower-traffic volume neighborhood streets. This would transform the area significantly, improving livability for employees, residents and visitors by providing alternative routes for local trips.
- As the district becomes better connected, high frequency bus service would become more viable; a proposed station on the future passenger rail route would connect the Health District to downtown Baton Rouge, New Orleans and beyond.
- Incorporate more housing near the existing employment areas, allowing employees to live closer to work places.

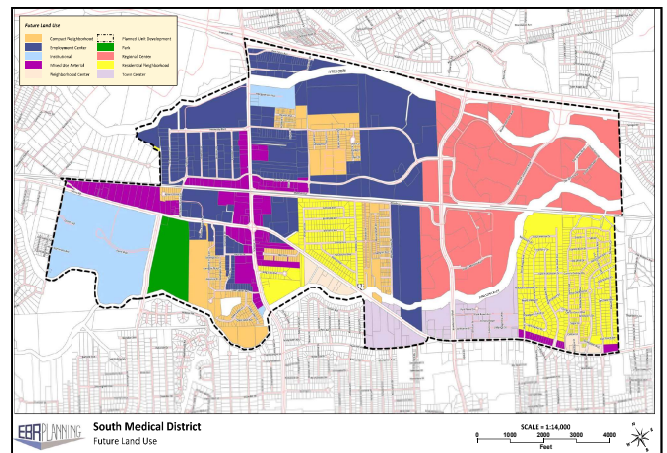
### Baton Rouge Health District (Adopted 2016)

The Baton Rouge Health District is a regional hub for health services. Located between Perkins Road and Interstate 10, the area is bordered to the south east by the Mall of Louisiana, both a regional destination and employment centers. Our Lady of the Lake Hospital will soon become a teaching hospital for LSU's Medical College, and both Pennington Biomedical Research Center and the Baton Rouge General Medical Center campuses continue their expansion in this pivotal area.

The popular Perkins Rowe mixed-use development has expanded housing, dining and shopping options. This compact neighborhood provides a model for additional residential, retail and commercial development options in this area. Beyond Perkins Rowe, newer single-family neighborhoods border the district, and the majority of trips are taken via the interstate or by one of three primary arterials in the district: Bluebonnet Boulevard, Essen Lane and Perkins Road. Traffic congestion has become a challenge.



The Baton Rouge Health District Plan, sponsored by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, provides a “diagnosis” of conditions which effect the healthy development of the area and provides a “treatment” plan outlining a course of action.



# COMMUNITY DESIGN AND NEIGHBORHOODS

## Part 3: Small Area Plans

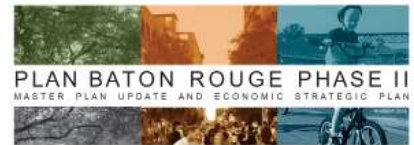
### Downtown

Baton Rouge has reinvested in downtown and taken significant steps to improve walkability, safety and comfort for pedestrians within the downtown. The renovation and construction of numerous buildings and public spaces — including the Hotel Indigo, North Boulevard Town Square, IBM, and the Kress Building — have helped to build momentum for continued reinvestment in downtown.

The Downtown Development District, Baton Rouge Area Foundation, and Center for Planning Excellence have all played critical roles by providing funding and leadership towards building local capacity for redevelopment initiatives. Plan Baton Rouge (1998), produced a broad local consensus for creating a more active, livable, enjoyable downtown environment. Plan Baton Rouge II (2009) further supported recommendations for developing the scope and character of downtown.



*Plan Baton Rouge II Downtown Visualization*



#### PLAN BATON ROUGE II PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Reconnect Downtown to the river and to adjacent neighborhoods
- Plan Downtown for future transit
- Implement a downtown-wide mixed-use, housing, and retail strategy
- Develop the Third Street anchor project – marketing of events and attractions, streetscape improvements along Third Street
- Develop housing and office in Victory Park
- Plan and maintain an urban forest
- Unify the Central Green
- Extend Capital Park into Desoto Park

### Mid City

The Mid City area encompasses land between Interstate 110 directly east of downtown to the campus of Baton Rouge Community College, and between North Street and Government Street. Florida Boulevard, Government Street and North Boulevard connect the area directly into downtown, the Capitol Complex, Spanish Town, and Beauregard Town. Redevelopment of the Westmoreland Shopping Center, and investment in properties located between the Baton Rouge General Medical Center and Baton Rouge Community College all provide excellent opportunities to strengthen the district. The proximity of Mid City to downtown and other major employment areas such as Baton Rouge General, the presence of strong neighborhoods, well-connected streets make it a highly desirable location for long-term investment.

#### Recommendations

- Focus redevelopment efforts on Government Street and Florida Boulevard.
- Design the passenger rail station near 15th and Government Street as a community asset, and integrate it into the neighborhood. Prioritize safety, convenience and pedestrian orientation.
- Facilitate redevelopment of the Westmoreland Shopping Center and sites surrounding Baton Rouge General Medical Center.
- Enhance the Convention Street Connection between Mid City and Baton Rouge Community College.
- Begin bus rapid transit service on Florida Boulevard.
- Continue to strengthen and support existing neighborhoods.



*Potential development along Government Street*

# COMMUNITY DESIGN AND NEIGHBORHOODS

## Part 3: Small Area Plans

### Recommendations

- Improve the appearance of the two primary entryways into the North Gate of LSU, the intersections of Highland Road with State Street and Chimes Street, including streetscape enhancements of these three roads.
- Enhance the State Street and Chimes Street connection to Dalrymple Drive and University Lake
- Formalize existing pedestrian circulation routes, connect roadways to disperse traffic and reduce congestion at peak times
- Adopt and enforce a shared parking ordinance.
- Discourage non-shoppers from leaving their cars in business lots or in on-street spots while not shopping through enforcement of parking time limits.
- Construct a public parking structure with active ground-floor uses (liner businesses).

### Old South, Nicholson Drive, and North Gate

Historically, Old South Baton Rouge included popular restaurants, department stores, and theaters. Federal grants brought investment back to the community, and significant progress has been made in creating quality, affordable housing options. The Old South neighborhood is bounded by downtown to the north, Dalrymple Drive to the east, the Mississippi River to the west and Louisiana State University Campus to the south.

Adjacent to the LSU campus, the North Gate district is a hub of student activity with walkable shopping and dining opportunities. LSU is linked to downtown by Nicholson Drive and Highland Road. A proposed street car route along Nicholson Drive would spur significant private investment in the area and create a safe and convenient transportation alternative to serve LSU and the larger community. Continued reinvestment in the North Gate area would strengthen connections to campus, and improved linkages to University Lake and Lake Crest would reduce traffic congestion and access to the lake.



*Old South Baton Rouge Strategic Plan*

The Old South Baton Rouge Strategic Plan (2005) identified implementation steps to generate reinvestment in the area, and to strengthen and preserve the character of the neighborhood, including the following:

- Encourage restoration of historic homes; assist seniors in repairing their homes.
- Celebrate the community's history.
- Facilitate vocational education and training for non-college bound middle and high school students.
- Develop alternative activities to promote youth education and discourage loitering.
- Enforce panhandling ordinance.
- Resolve the drainage issues.

### Redevelopment Authority's Community Improvements Plans

The East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority (RDA) and its consultant team worked for eighteen months to create Community Improvement Plans (CIPs) for five districts within East Baton Rouge Parish, including Choctaw Corridor, Northdale, Melrose East, Scotlandville Gateway, and Zion City & Glen Oaks. The plans are community-driven with residents and other stakeholders providing input for guiding the future reinvestment and development in their communities to ensure that redevelopment efforts are sustainable and in keeping with each respective community's needs, character, and vision, as determined through discussions between the RDA, elected officials, and community stakeholders. In addition, the plans deliver action-oriented strategies that identify opportunities for reinvestment back into the community, while building upon the momentum of other revitalization efforts currently underway.

### Zion City and Glen Oaks

Located near the Baton Rouge Metropolitan Airport, Airline Highway, and Interstate 110, Zion City and Glen Oaks are close knit communities containing some of the first subdivisions in North Baton Rouge. The vision of the CIP is for this area to emerge as a thriving residential community adjacent to commerce, located in the larger Howell Place development as well as future economic opportunities along Hooper Road and Plank Road.



# COMMUNITY DESIGN AND NEIGHBORHOODS

## Part 3: Small Area Plans

### Northdale and Standard Heights

Established in 1956, these neighborhoods are bordered by the Kansas City Southern Railway to the west, and Interstate 110 and Choctaw Drive. The vision is to reinterpret Northdale's & Standard Heights' successful pasts into a sustainable future and build on enhancements to BREC Memorial Stadium complex and the Downtown Development's Greenway Plan to re-connect the area to surrounding communities.



### Choctaw Corridor

The CIP area follows Choctaw Drive between Foster Drive and the Interstate 110. The plan envisions a prosperous, sustainable, and vital community that embraces its legacy as a significant commercial and industrial area in Baton Rouge, while emerging as a contemporary center of commerce that physically and economically connects to East Baton Rouge Parish as a whole.



### Melrose East

Located north of Florida Boulevard and west of North Ardenwood Drive, Melrose East retains the potential for renewal. Proximity to the surrounding community, including Bon Carre, Baton Rouge Community College, and Florida Boulevard corridor, will enhance the efforts of the RDA to bring about a renaissance in the area.



## Part 4:

### Maintaining Neighborhood Vitality

The physical condition of public and private property in neighborhoods should be maintained through a robust code enforcement effort. Red Stick 311 processes citizen requests for service including complaints concerning code violations, tall grass, illegal signs, litter, and blighted properties. Citizen requests can be submitted online, by dialing 3-1-1, or through a mobile phone application regarding the following topics:

- Code violations
- Drainage, erosion, flooding or holes
- Environmental issues
- Garbage and recycling service
- Mowing and tree issues
- Road maintenance issues
- Sewer and wastewater
- Street and traffic issues



*Blighted home*

## Part 5: Goals, Objectives and Actions to Achieve the Vision

This section details the Community Design and Neighborhoods goals, objectives and actions that will move East Baton Rouge Parish toward the community's Vision.

**Goals** are the big overarching ideas, changes or practices that are essential to realize the community's Vision.

**Objectives** establish specific, measurable, attainable and realistic goals that guide how the Comprehensive Plan is implemented in a way that will achieve the Vision.

**Actions** outline the steps needed to achieve the objectives.

# COMMUNITY DESIGN AND NEIGHBORHOODS

## Part 5: Goals, Objectives and Actions

### Community Design and Neighborhoods Goals

1. Enhance community character by upgrading components of the built environment.
2. Support a distinctive community identity; enriched sense of place, and high quality of life.
3. Promote development patterns that encourage connectivity and pedestrian orientation.

### Community Design and Neighborhoods Goal 1

#### Enhance community character by upgrading components of the built environment.

##### Objective 1.1

Create and support quality streetscape design for an inviting, vibrant public realm. Elements include street spaces, building setbacks, sidewalks, and aesthetic components such as vegetated buffers, street trees, and street furniture.

##### Actions to support objective 1.2:

- 1.1.1 Identify areas in need of streetscape design upgrades, such as downtown, urban centers and corridors, and main streets.
- 1.1.2 Periodically evaluate the landscape regulations of the UDC to determine their effectiveness in maintaining, enhancing, restoring and creating landscape environments that improve the visual quality of residential, commercial and industrial areas, and public places.
- 1.1.3 Periodically review the UDC's Landscape Guidelines to assess best practices and enforcement measures to ensure protection and enhancement of the aesthetic qualities of the Parish.
- 1.1.4 Revise the UDC to ensure that the characteristics that contribute to a vibrant, active street space are provided:

**Enclosure:** How streets are visually and spatially defined by building placement, façade design, trees, etc.

**Human scale:** The articulation of physical elements with a size and proportion compatible for human comfort.

## Part 5: Goals, Objectives and Actions

**Connectivity:** Continuity of streetscape networks that provide linkages between areas.

**Facilities:** Include intersection bulb-outs, crosswalks, bike racks, shaded seating, trash containers, and landscape elements, and enhance convenience and safety.

**Signage:** Regulatory, wayfinding, and commercial signs coordinated into an orderly pattern for less visual clutter and obstacles.

**Lighting:** Provide safe pedestrian lighting levels while ensuring dark skies.

### Objective 1.2

Signage along roadways should meet high design standards to improve the visual quality, safety, and convenience of the built environment.

#### Actions to support objective 1.3:

- 1.2.1 Consolidate and coordinate street signs to decrease visual clutter and increase signage legibility.
- 1.2.2 Review the UDC sign regulations to assess best practices and enforcement measures for signs.
- 1.2.3 Explore the needs and opportunities for a long-term upgrade to the City-Parish wayfinding system. This should entail a comprehensive signage type inventory, design assessment, and incorporation of best-practices guidelines.
- 1.2.4 Identify areas in need of gateway enhancements such as entry points to districts, downtown, and historic neighborhoods to promote an enhanced identity and entry experience throughout

the Capital City. Gateways should be a creative combination of signage, landscaping, and lighting to provide signature landmarks.

### Objective 1.3

Urban lighting which illuminates streets, parking areas, commercial storefronts, signage, architectural and landscape features, should meet high design standards to improve safety and visual quality of the environment.

#### Actions to support objective 1.4:

- 1.3.1 Identify areas in need of lighting enhancements, such as downtown, urban centers and corridors, and main streets.
- 1.3.2 Review the UDC lighting regulations to assess best practices and enforcement measures.

### Objective 1.4

Public Art should be incorporated into the built environment to provide an important cultural and social expression, as a key component of the community's identity and aesthetic quality.

#### Actions to support objective 1.5:

- 1.4.1 Locations of public art should include public plazas, transit stations, urban streetscapes, signage, and lobbies of public buildings.
- 1.4.2 The Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge should continue to maintain a Public Art Committee to promote awareness, integration, and expansion of public art.
- 1.4.3 Explore funding sources to support long-term monitoring and maintenance of existing public art, plus resources to create new works of public art,

# COMMUNITY DESIGN AND NEIGHBORHOODS

## Part 5: Goals, Objectives and Actions

- 1.4.4 Identify areas with prime potential for public art enhancement, such as downtown, mixed-use areas districts, parks, and schools.
- 1.4.5 Explore funding sources for municipally funded commercial buildings, street programs, and parks, such as a percent-for-art program.

### Objective 1.5

Support the efforts of community development organizations across East Baton Rouge Parish to provide residents in distressed neighborhoods access to programs and partners to improve and stabilize their neighborhoods.

Actions to support objective:

- 1.5.1 Develop a neighborhood community improvements plan for home improvements, traffic calming, connectivity and bike and pedestrian improvements.
- 1.5.2 Encourage infill housing on vacant lots in existing neighborhoods, through assistance with acquisition, pre-development, development and homebuyer subsidies.

### Objective 1.6

Enhance existing neighborhoods by eliminating blighted properties.

- 1.6.1 Develop a public outreach effort to ensure residents understand their role in the blight elimination process.
- 1.6.2 Develop and implement a robust code enforcement strategy to eliminate blight.
- 1.6.3 Investigate reported code violations within 72 hours of an initial report and continue to address all related issues until they are resolved.

- 1.6.4 Provide adequate resources and monitor performance to assure adequate administration and enforcement of existing codes and ordinances including zoning, subdivision, sign controls and new ordinances.
- 1.6.5 Increase code enforcement efforts in areas identifies for redevelopment and revitalization.
- 1.6.6 Revise policies and procedures to allow for more expeditious disposition of adjudicated properties.

## Community Design and Neighborhoods Goal 2

**Support a distinctive community identity, enriched sense of place, and high quality of life.**

### Objective 2.1

Ensure that Baton Rouge consists of a strong identity and character that is appealing to businesses and residents. This includes focusing on the City-Parish's civic, cultural, environmental, educational and historical assets.

Actions to support objective 2.1:

- 2.1.1 Encourage the building of environments that respect the character of place and support the uniqueness of an area.
- 2.1.2 Identify and provide funding to enhance pedestrian and bicycle amenities on streets in priority areas.
- 2.1.3 Encourage new developments to provide comfortable, pedestrian-oriented: environments utilizing seating areas, shade and lighting.

## Part 5: Goals, Objectives and Actions

- 2.1.4 Site buildings appropriate to their context.
- 2.1.5 Develop regulations that encourage the use of shared parking.
- 2.1.6 Require active uses on the ground floor of parking structures that front streets.
- 2.1.7 Require transparent building entrances and numerous transparent windows to offer “eyes on the street,” improving both security and pedestrian access.
- 2.1.8 Require loading zones, dumpsters, and mechanical equipment to be screened from view from the street.
- 2.1.9 Require new development to be appropriate to the context of its location in density, massing, intensity and size.

### Objective 2.2

Use the small area planning process to prioritize areas where change is desired.

- 2.2.1 Include 20-minute neighborhood characteristics in small area plans including:
  - The development of neighborhood-serving retail and service uses near existing neighborhoods; and
  - Increased density of housing in appropriate locations to sustain the minimum level of retail and public services to support a 20-minute neighborhood.
- 2.2.2 Incorporate the goals of the existing design overlays into the updated UDC.

### Objective 2.3

Create community gathering spaces to encourage social interaction.

### Actions to support objective 1.2:

- 2.3.1 Provide networks of pedestrian scale plazas, squares, parks, and greenways to provide a variety of gathering spaces throughout the parish.
- 2.3.2 Prioritize funds for the maintenance of these public amenity areas.

### Objective 2.4

Historic resources are protected, preserved, restored and adaptively reused. Adaptive reuse of buildings maintains existing neighborhood patterns and repurposes unused structures through incentivized renovations, façade improvement grants, and related programs.

### Actions to support objective 2.3:

- 2.4.1 Incorporate amendments that support the preservation of historic resources into the UDC.
- 2.4.2 Update historic preservation criteria.
- 2.4.3 Expand historic designation program to protect additional areas.

## Community Design and Neighborhoods Goal 3

*(See Land Use element)*

**Promote development patterns that encourage connectivity and pedestrian orientation.**

### Objective 3.1

Promote well connected growth pattern with an extensive network of vibrant centers and corridors spread throughout the parish.

# COMMUNITY DESIGN AND NEIGHBORHOODS

## Objective 3.2

Support the creation of places that provide environmental, health, and financial benefits to the community.

## Objective 3.3

Promote infill development to bolster areas with prime redevelopment potential.